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Former CIA head speaks in Branner

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Former Central Intelligence Agency Director Stansfield Turner criticized a series of President Reagan's actions, which he said have "unleashed" the CIA, during a talk at Branner Hall Friday.

Turner called a 1981 Reagan executive order that for the first time authorized covert operations inside the United States a "bad move."

"It was bad from my point of view, because they opened up the possibility of the CIA spying on Americans. I don't think that it was desirable or necessary. They unleashed (the CIA) to an extent which I think was a bad move," he said before the audience of 120.

Turner, who headed the CIA for three years during the Carter administration, gave a brief talk and then answered a variety of questions from members of the audience.

Turner also said he was worried about a "gradual erosion" of checks on the CIA.

"The series of controls and oversight on the intelligence process has been weakened," he said.

"They (the CIA) need guidance. They need some form of checks. We have developed those. I really hope they (Reagan administration officials) don't weaken them further. I don't think they have weakened them seriously, but I am worried about a gradual erosion," he said.

Turner cited a number of administration actions in the past two years that have increased the power and secrecy of the CIA.

The executive order issued in late 1981 lifted a long-standing ban on covert operations inside the United States, permitting physical surveillance of U.S. residents when "significant foreign intelligence" was sought.

In addition, the Intelligence Identification Act enacted June 23 last year made it a crime to disclose names of U.S. intelligence agents, even when the information was publicly available.

According to Turner, Reagan may

than it was under previous administrations.

"The Reagan administration has weakened this check by not wording it quite as mandatorily, which signals to me at least an intent not to be as stringent," he said.

Turner also had criticism for U.S. military operations in Nicaragua, designed to curb the flow of arms shipments to El Salvador.

"I think it is a very ill-advised move that the government and the CIA are making. We have blown Central America out of proportion in my opinion," he said.

Turner said that when Congress appropriated money for El Salvador, Reagan was told that "none of this money is to be used to try to destabilize the Somoza regime."

"The administration is saying we are making these raids to prevent the Nicaraguans from supplying arms to the El Salvador rebels. It's a very fine and tenuous line. If they are down there with the intent of destabilizing, they are doing it against the law today," he said.

Turner also criticized Reagan's Soviet-American policies, by saying that improvements in relations between the countries are not possible in "this administration that talks so stridently against the Soviet Union."

"We must maintain a line of communication with the Soviet Union. If we ever get to where we really don't understand each other and we don't communicate at all, it could be dangerous for the whole world," he said.

In response to a question about CIA abuses of power, Turner said that although the CIA may have been guilty of such abuses in the past, it has always had "good motives."

"I believe that those excesses, those improper performances and intrusions into the life of Americans, were the excess of the dedication and the desire to serve the country," he said.

"The people in the CIA are not malevolent, but secrecy in any organization, in any society, breeds abuse," he said.